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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Identical letters dated 6 July 2006 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, has further escalated its military aggression against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, causing extensive loss of human life and vast destruction of property, in grave breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. At least 21 Palestinians, including children, have been brutally killed by the military forces of the occupying Power and more than 60 other Palestinians, including at least 15 children and 10 members of the same family, have been seriously wounded in attacks launched today in the Gaza Strip.

In the early morning hours of the day, the Israeli occupying forces moved several miles into the northern Gaza Strip, seizing large areas once occupied by Jewish settlements, reportedly for the establishment of a so-called buffer zone in the north, and also seizing positions in and around the towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun. From these areas, the occupying forces continued to carry out an air and ground assault against the civilian population and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. That assault began last week and has not ceased since my last letter to you, with air strikes from warplanes and helicopter gunships and artillery fire from tanks positioned throughout the area, including between Palestinian homes in densely populated areas. This violent and lethal military campaign has caused widespread terror and trauma among the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza and has caused dozens of families, particularly in the Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun areas, to flee their homes in fear for their lives.

The attacks being carried out today by the Israeli occupying forces come on the heels of the statements made in recent days by Israeli officials showing their intent to widen and deepen the military campaign in the Gaza Strip, including statements by the Israeli Prime Minister, who has repeatedly warned that the Palestinian people and their leadership will face "far-reaching consequences".

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Indeed, these bloody attacks were preceded in recent days by a barrage of air strikes and tank fire at several targets in the Gaza Strip, including the building housing the Palestinian Ministry of Interior and a school in Gaza City, all aimed at causing deliberate destruction to Palestinian institutions and property and further fear and panic among the population.

These attacks, which have resulted in the killing of civilians and the endangerment of the lives of thousands of other civilians, including children and women, and which have caused extensive destruction of property, constitute reprisals by the occupying Power against the Palestinian civilian population and the collective punishment of the entire population, both of which are strictly prohibited by the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Regardless of the pretexts given, it remains without a doubt that flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law as well as extensive war crimes are being blatantly committed by Israel, the occupying Power, throughout the course of this ongoing military aggression against the defenseless Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip. Moreover, this aggressive military and terror campaign has seriously impacted the already-dire humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and there are widespread fears that the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people under Israel's siege could rapidly deteriorate to disastrous proportions if the campaign is not ended.

The international community cannot continue to stand idly by while the defenseless Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation continues to be subjected to this incessant barrage of military assaults and to grave humanitarian conditions and increased suffering and hardships. In light of the deteriorating situation resulting from Israel's military escalation, we are compelled to reiterate that it is incumbent upon the international community, especially the Security Council, to undertake the necessary actions to address this critical situation in order to avert its further deterioration, to save the lives of innocent and defenseless civilians and to save the two sides, as well as the region as a whole, from an irrevocable cycle of violence, instability and insecurity. The bloodshed and death caused today by the occupying Power in northern Gaza must serve as an alarm for the international community revealing what the future holds should this Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people continue.

Accordingly, we once again reiterate that the international community should speedily condemn Israel's military aggression and illegal practices against the Palestinian people and their leadership and demand that Israel abide by all of its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Efforts should be undertaken to compel the occupying Power to immediately cease its aggression in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including, inter alia, the immediate cessation of military attacks against the Palestinian civilian population, the cessation of destruction, the withdrawal of its forces to outside the Gaza Strip and the release of all of the Palestinian officials it has detained. Diplomacy is the only means by which this grave crisis can be resolved.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 251 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 3 July 2006 (A/ES-10/343-S/2006/479), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian

people since September 2000. In this regard, I wish to inform you that it is our intention to forward to you the list of Palestinian martyrs killed in recent days by the Israeli occupying forces as soon as all the dead have been identified. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as an official document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations